

NY Times 14 JUN 68

Approved For Release 2003/11/19 : CIA-RDP70B00338R000200210009-4

THE NEW YORK TIMES

Senate Coalition Seeks to Block New Missile Net

By JOHN W. FINNEY
Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, June 13—A bipartisan coalition opened a campaign in the Senate today to reverse the Administration's decision to deploy a \$5-billion missile defense system.

Senator John Sherman Cooper, Republican of Kentucky, contended in a speech that the system would not enhance the nation's security, would accelerate the atomic arms race with the Soviet Union and would divert funds from essential domestic programs.

Senator Cooper is a leader of a bipartisan Senate group that has for several weeks been carefully but quietly organizing to challenge the Administration's decision of last fall to build a "thin" anti-ballistic missile system, known as Sentinel, to provide a defense against the Chinese nuclear missile threat.

In preparation for the forthcoming clash with the military spokesmen in the Senate, the coalition has been going through a cram course on nuclear strategy with briefings from defense officials and private scientists, including Dr. Jerome A. Wiesner, science adviser to President Kennedy. Dr. Wiesner is an outspoken opponent of the Johnson Administration's decision to deploy the Sentinel system.

The objective of the coalition is to postpone for at least one year a start in the deployment of the Sentinel system, which, according to the Administrative schedule, would go into operation in the early 1970's.

To achieve this objective, the coalition proposes to strike out system because they think the about \$600-million for further United States should deploy a

Cooper Speech Opens Drive to Reverse Administration on a Defensive System

research and development on the system.

On the basis of preliminary soundings, the coalition believes it has a good chance of succeeding in what is probably the most concentrated attack on Administration defense policy in recent years.

In addition to the Administration, the coalition is challenging the Senate "establishment," which is well represented on the Senate Appropriations and Armed Services committees. But the coalition has derived some political strength by drawing some members of the "establishment" in the fold.

Teaming up with Senator Cooper, a respected spokesman on the Republican side, will be Senator Philip A. Hart of Michigan, a leader of Senate Democratic liberals.

Support of Mansfield

Senator Mike Mansfield of Montana, the Democratic leader, will also support the coalition, and there is a possibility that Senator Stuart Symington, Democrat of Missouri, a senior member of the Armed Services Committee, will join as a leader in the campaign.

In the showdown votes in the next few weeks, the coalition expects to assemble a majority by appealing to various factions in the Senate—those opposed to the missile deployment on principle, those who

wish to find some way to economize and those who are opposed to the "thin" Sentinel

"thick" system against the Soviet Union.

While the group has not had any contact with the White House, there is a suspicion in Senate circles that the Administration will not strongly oppose a Congressional move to delay deployment of the system.

In part, the Administration's decision to deploy the Sentinel system was politically motivated, intended to head off an emerging Republican charge that the Administration was permitting a "missile gap" to develop.

But as a political threat, the "missile gap" issue seems to have evaporated, partly because of President Johnson's withdrawal as a candidate and partly because Communist China has not moved as rapidly as had been predicted by the Defense Department in developing intercontinental missiles capable of striking at the United States.

In addition, it is believed in Senate circles that the Administration, in light of agreement on a nonproliferation treaty, might welcome a Congressional initiative to delay deployment of the Sentinel system.

In his speech yesterday before the United Nations General Assembly, President Johnson emphasized his hope that the nonproliferation treaty would lead to other arms control steps, such as a limitation by the United States and the Soviet Union on strategic defensive as well as offensive nuclear weapons systems.

Today, Senator Cooper contended that a decision to proceed with the Sentinel system would only make "more difficult" any arms control agreement with the Soviet Union.